# Cubism

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[](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/File:JuanGris.Portrait_of_Picasso.jpg) [](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/File:Braque.woman.400pix.jpg)

[https://secure.wikimedia.org/skins-1.5/common/images/magnify-clip.png](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/File:Braque.woman.400pix.jpg)

[Georges Braque](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Georges_Braque), *Woman with a Guitar,* 1913. [Musée National d'Art Moderne](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Mus%C3%A9e_National_d%27Art_Moderne), [Centre Georges Pompidou](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Centre_Georges_Pompidou), [Paris, France](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Paris,_France). An early example of *Synthetic Cubism.*

**Cubism** was a 20th century [avant-garde](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Avant-garde) [art movement](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Art_movement), pioneered by [Pablo Picasso](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Pablo_Picasso) and [Georges Braque](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Georges_Braque), that revolutionized European [painting](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Painting) and [sculpture](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Sculpture), and inspired related movements in [music](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Music) and [literature](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Literature). The first branch of cubism, known as *Analytic Cubism*, was both radical and influential as a short but highly significant art movement between 1907 and 1911 in France. In its second phase, *Synthetic Cubism,* the movement spread and remained vital until around 1919, when the [Surrealist](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Surrealism) movement gained popularity.

English [art historian](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Art_historian) [Douglas Cooper](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Douglas_Cooper_%28art_historian%29) describes three phases of Cubism in his seminal book, *The Cubist Epoch*. According to Cooper there was "Early Cubism", (from 1906 to 1908) when the movement was initially developed in the studios of Picasso and Braque; the second phase being called "High Cubism", (from 1909 to 1914) during which time [Juan Gris](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Juan_Gris) emerged as an important exponent; and finally Cooper referred to "Late Cubism" (from 1914 to 1921) as the last phase of Cubism as a radical [avant-garde](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Avant-garde) movement.[[1]](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Cubism#cite_note-0)

In cubist artworks, objects are broken up, analyzed, and re-assembled in an abstracted form—instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, the artist depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context. Often the surfaces intersect at seemingly random angles, removing a coherent sense of depth. The background and object planes interpenetrate one another to create the shallow ambiguous space, one of cubism's distinct characteristics.

Some believe that the roots of cubism are to be found in the two distinct tendencies of Cézanne's later work: firstly to break the painted surface into small multifaceted areas of paint, thereby emphasizing the plural viewpoint given by [binocular vision](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Binocular_vision), and secondly his interest in the simplification of natural forms into cylinders, spheres, and cones.

However the cubists explored this concept further than Cézanne; they represented all the surfaces of depicted objects in a single picture plane, as if the objects had all their faces visible at the same time. This new kind of depiction revolutionized the way in which objects could be visualized in painting and art.

The invention of Cubism was a joint effort between Picasso and [Braque](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Georges_Braque), then residents of [Montmartre](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Montmartre), [Paris](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Paris). These artists were the movement's main innovators. A later active participant was the Spaniard [Juan Gris](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Juan_Gris). After meeting in 1907 Braque and Picasso in particular began working on the development of Cubism. Picasso was initially the force and influence that persuaded Braque by 1908 to move away from [Fauvism](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Fauvism). The two artists began working closely together in late 1908–early 1909 until the outbreak of [World War I](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/World_War_I) in 1914. The movement spread quickly throughout Paris and Europe.

French art critic [Louis Vauxcelles](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Louis_Vauxcelles) first used the term "cubism", or "bizarre cubiques", in 1908 after seeing a picture by Braque. He described it as "full of little cubes", after which the term quickly gained wide use although the two creators did not initially adopt it. Art historian [Ernst Gombrich](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Ernst_Gombrich) described cubism as "the most radical attempt to stamp out ambiguity and to enforce one reading of the picture—that of a man-made construction, a coloured canvas."[[4]](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Cubism#cite_note-3)

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